For Idea and Reality.

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Two Kinds of Instruction.

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[297] Instruction and cultivation can be planned and conducted in very different directions; in attempting to enumerate all possible methods one would arrive at a number beyond survey. Here attention shall be drawn only to two schools unlike in design, aim and procedure, the *learned* school and the *popular*.

The hallmark of learned instruction is the imparting of thoroughly coherent knowledge with a corresponding cultivation of the mind; memory and understanding are the faculties of the soul on whose development it chiefly depends: here the work is directed originally at the intellectual nature of man, not at the whole man. The task of popular instruction, by contrast, is a personal cultivation, an influence on the mind, an awakening of the powers of the soul with a corresponding enlightenment about the goal and conditions of human life for the individual, for society, for the race: here the work is directed radically at the whole man. In learned instruction the interest in knowledge is and must be the highest, whereas the original driving force of popular enlightenment is to be sought in the interest in life. As the interests are, so must the
[298] endeavors be. It is necessary to separate the two kinds of instruction properly from one another when one wishes to gain clarity about the principles; but this is not to deny that between the two there must be manifold links, that instruction in knowledge, for example, can exert an influence, though a mediate one, yet a considerable one, on character and direction of life, just as popular enlightenment, for its part, must, in order to reach any height, both presuppose and promote the acquisition of the necessary preliminary knowledge.

Learned instruction is among all civilized peoples in full swing and full recognition. The school of knowledge is old; through centuries it has known how to advance with the times, to reform itself, and in spite of manifold hindrances both internal and external to fight its way to an ever wider circle of diffusion. “Knowledge is power,” this truth stands clear before all cultivated people, equally clear before the industrious citizen who looks practically to the application and utility of knowledge, and before the theorizing researcher, whose ideal goal is knowledge itself. Such a recognition is as yet far from having fallen to the share of popular instruction. Nor is this instruction centuries old; on the contrary, it is very young, still in its first, groping beginning; the vital thought in its inner peculiarity has — if only we could say it without all too

painful offense to those who have the disposition for it — first of all broken forth with the Grundtvigian high schools.

Before we nevertheless attempt a closer clarification of what and how much lies in this assertion, we must first ward off some misunderstandings which in recent times, perhaps particularly on the occasion of the awakening popular striving, have *[299]* arisen concerning the learned system of instruction.

From a somewhat peasant-like point of view people have been inclined to regard the University and the learned schools with everything that belongs under them as antiquated arrangements, institutions whose imminent dissolution must be considered a necessary condition for freer progress in the spirit; in complaints about the "aristocracy of books," "the learned guild system," "the bread-and-butter system" and so on, it has been maintained that the reading of lessons, exercises in composition, and strict examination transformed the school into a kind of house of correction, an official institution of compulsion, which cowed the courage of the young, dulled the innate desire to learn, weakened the vital powers, brought ice-cold into the warm hearts and brought upon them a spiritual chill. Although many of these objections, when we judge by outward reality, are not exactly wholly unfounded, they are yet, when we look to the idea, groundless.

The school of knowledge must, in order to solve its tasks, necessarily proceed from definite presuppositions and make particular demands. The first condition is that the pupil impress upon himself what is explained and prescribed to him by learning certain lessons; no other way to the acquisition of knowledge is given. Now such a reading of lessons, especially when the lessons gradually become more numerous and larger, may often be felt as an oppressive burden; here there can be talk of lightening the burden for the young, if it becomes too heavy for him, but here there can reasonably be no talk of relieving him of the burden. Burden indicates work, and the young person must learn to work. As now the school on the whole will watch that the pupil *[300]* is, without overexertion, put in a position to work with seriousness, diligence and zest, so it will also, by careful hearing of lessons, guidance and correction, know how to control the work. The pupil arrives in this way at a clear conception of what he can do and what he cannot do; he learns what it is to learn something; he gradually perceives more distinctly how necessary it is to know something thoroughly, to know it in coherence, solidly, surely and completely. Thus he comes more and more under the discipline of thought and feels the weight of valid grounds — an indispensable element in the development of character; for the human being who has no respect for

clear thoughts and valid grounds lacks something essential in being a human being, however living a feeling, however warm a heart he may otherwise have.

As a complaint against the learned system of schooling in its present form one not seldom hears the objection that the program has too many headings, that far too many heterogeneous things are demanded, so that the pupils learn a little of everything without learning anything thoroughly. We shall not here inquire whether perhaps at present too many subjects are demanded, whether these subjects do not perhaps stand merely externally coordinate, instead of being subordinated under a few principal subjects which could give the whole greater consistency and closure; we shall only point out that the school of knowledge must secure its intellectual foundation, and that this foundation becomes too narrow and the horizon too limited when the subjects of study are too few and uniform. The scientific preparatory school cannot begin as a
[301] vocational school; for that very reason it takes up so many heterogeneous subjects. The many subjects mean that it does not depend especially on any single one by itself, that the single subject is only a single element in the whole cultivation. Now it is of course quite natural that among several awakened and gifted pupils one will have an eye and a predilection for one subject, another for another, one for history, another for mathematics, a third for languages, and so forth; such expressions of individual predilection can even be counted among the very promising signs. But even if the school can to a certain degree overlook the intellectual inclinations of individuals, it dare not, out of regard for the even and, as far as possible, harmonious development of the faculties, give youthful amateurishness untimely nourishment, any more than it dares accept the excuse that a particular head should be so exclusively organized for a single branch of instruction that on this account it could not possibly enter into the rudiments of the others. When the demand is "to learn something thoroughly in the many subjects," this can reasonably be understood only to mean that the pupil little by little comes to a cognition of how important it is to him to work together what is heterogeneous, so that the overview of the whole stands in the right relation to the insight into its particulars; it is ideal totalities, a realm of laws, a world of cognitions, which gradually is to dawn upon his inner sight. The much-disputed system of examination, when seen in this light, will then precisely contribute its share to the attainment of the end.

It is a great and significant task that the student must solve when he is to prepare
[302] himself thoroughly for a learned examination. It is not done with his stuffing a multitude of pieces of knowledge and doctrines into his memory; he must understand how

to work through the rich, highly heterogeneous material until he has the whole mass organized. This requires more than mechanics of the understanding, memory and diligence; this requires first and last a wakeful, active, independently working thinking. True, thinking cannot yet show its independence by the student's discovering on his own either new facts or new truths; he is directly confined to receiving and appropriating what is handed down. But if we look more closely and consider what lies in this, we easily discover that the powers which essentially condition scientific productivity are already here in full activity. It is, as is well known, by no means an easy matter to enter completely into a given doctrine, even when the doctrines are presented in clear systematic coherence. The difficulty increases when several mutually conflicting views are to be judged and what conflicts is to be reconciled; it takes suppleness of spirit, self-possession and resignation to take possession of foreign thoughts, to live oneself into them and make them one's own. The practice of this is so far from weakening scientific self-thinking that it on the contrary supplies one of its first indispensable conditions. How much immature criticism, how many loose, impudent, saucy dismissals of more profound works are not brought to market in the literary marketplace solely for the reason that the critics have neglected that beneficial practice and for that reason lack the self-criticism which should warn them against taking up tasks which they have so little worked through that they would, even as far as the most meagre account is concerned, come off miserably, if they had *[303]* to pass a public, impartial, but strict examination.

The next thing the preparation demands is to get the heterogeneous cognitions grouped in consciousness in such a way that the details stand out distinctly without harming the overview. In this endeavor each person is in the strictest sense referred to himself; for the procedure that suits the one may be highly inconvenient for the other. The psychological interplay between imagination, understanding and memory, on which it here depends, can, in its inner, fine, often imperceptible transitions, be highly different in different people. He who, for example, has a very comprehensive and faithful memory will be inclined to begin with the particulars and regard the whole as a sum of manifold parts; only by remembering is he helped to think: the understanding operates on the foundation of memory. He in whom understanding and thinking have a natural preponderance must go the opposite way. For him it is first of all important to bring out the general, to penetrate into the coherence of the propositions and to preserve the overview. In order not to be burdened with superfluous material, he must at every step forward let thinking strictly test and exactly weigh which and how

many particulars in the given context necessarily belong to the understanding of the whole: it is the understanding which by this economy comes to the aid of memory. That both, he with the strong memory and he with the penetrating understanding, must strive toward one and the same goal, goes without saying; but it makes, as
[304] regards the manner of working, an essential difference whether it is memory that originally carries the understanding, or the reverse.

A scientific passage through a great edifice of doctrine, rounded off in itself, whose portals and pillars, whose architectonic members and parts stand in symmetrical harmony with one another and with the whole, and along with it a corresponding psychological insight into the intellectual nature of the self, a thorough acquaintance with one's own spiritual-individual nature, a self-criticism that reveals deficiencies and excellences and furnishes a measure of future capacity for work, are advantages which hardly anyone who by a thorough preparation for examination has endured the strain will regret having acquired.

Hence, so long as we esteem science and hold fast to the scientific standpoint, no well-founded objection whatever can be made against the school as a school of knowledge; it is much rather to be wished and hoped that learned instruction, unassailed by the changing moods of the time, may in one and all remain true to its character. In the prevailing notions of knowledge and cultivation, on the other hand, there is a fundamental error which must be combated with the greatest vigor.

It is a prejudice deeply ingrained in many that the multiplicity of knowledge is the hallmark of cultivation, that he who has many pieces of knowledge, can speak many languages and join in the talk about everything, is the truly cultivated, whereas he who has less knowledge and speaks only one language betrays a lack of cultivation and as a limited individual may easily be overlooked in cultivated society. That this way of looking at things, which stands in close connection with the prevailing
[305] inclination of the age to place the exclusive superiority of man in the intellectual, is to the irreparable harm of the life of the spirit in all directions, can easily be seen upon a little closer consideration.

In the first place it is harmful to learned instruction; for it brings it about that the school of knowledge incessantly runs the danger of falling out of its original character. If it is learning and science that are essentially to condition the development of the spirit, then the school must most strictly inculcate that these high intellectual goods are first of all pursued for their own sake without any regard to external, finite advantages. To let oneself be admitted into the learned school is then the same as

to dedicate one's life, one's best time and one's best powers to the cultivation of science. To be sure, the state ought to see to it that science can always secure to its true devotees a real station in life, an honorable place in society; but such promising prospects must not come into consideration when the question is of the first motives. Before science can serve as a means, it must first be an end in itself, be attributed value in and for itself and be loved for its own sake. The disciple who, as he enters the school, does not bring with him a youthfully great, if also youthfully unclear, conception of the glorious, the sublime in striving after knowledge and insight, him the Muses will not greet: he enters as one unworthy; and the disciple who, although the school applies its best teaching powers to open his eye and awaken his sense, yet cannot get further than to the practical question of what use there is in learning so many useless things, ought, even if he otherwise reads the lessons ever so irreproachably, to be *[306]* given consilium abeundi, for he is not in his right place, he has gone astray. But if the school were to maintain the ideal demands in this way, then it follows of itself that, in order to gain in content, it would have to lose considerably in extent. To stay with classical cultivation, two or three Latin schools, each annually sending on average ten to twelve students to the University, would probably be about the maximum in so small a country as Denmark. Now, on the contrary, as unclear notions about the obstacles and conditions of the life of the spirit in part decide the issue, the matter stands otherwise.

In the decent opinion that the studious path is after all always a safe and honorable path, that a treasure of knowledge is a precious treasure, and that "the best one can do for one's children is to give them a good upbringing," parents and guardians see themselves concerned about higher institutions of cultivation, and often see wrongly; for there is a rush upon the Latin schools, the gymnasia and the University. This points, especially when we look toward a coming time in which hardly any well-to-do citizen will have cause to envy the official class the golden horn of plenty, evidently to a more deeply lying fundamental error. It cannot possibly be regard for the advantage or the good prospects that here has the preponderance; it must be something else. It is the foggy mixture of two kinds of cultivation, the intellectual and the personal, that confuses the conception. — The Realskole, for example, is unequivocally a school of knowledge and nothing else. He who wishes to put his son in a Realskole easily becomes aware of what it is he really wants. He wants the young person to work his way forward, to acquire a sum of useful knowledge in definite subjects. He may *[307]* otherwise have the greatest respect for scholarliness, particularly for the real sciences;

he may understand that working with the head strengthens the faculties and gives the able man a peculiar superiority of understanding; but he is not easily befooled by unclear fancies concerning the ideal in the instruction itself: that the Realskole should in a special degree ennoble the heart and elevate the spiritual in the development of personality, hardly occurs to him. Otherwise with classical instruction; it seems once and for all to have received a privilege to foster the noblest and deepest in the human spirit, so that it both imparts useful knowledge and at the same time gives the young souls the finer spiritual nourishment which is the condition of ideal personality. But precisely this divided, two-sided regard, the regard partly to the useful knowledge, partly to the finer spiritual nourishment, brings with it an ambiguity that is extremely dangerous to the school. It dare no longer regard its pupils exclusively as a circle of young future devotees of science; far from it! here many are present who notoriously have never thought of sacrificing their lives to the sciences; they are here merely for the sake of collecting knowledge and to obtain some classical cultivation. Still less dare the school lay the decisive stress on the utility of knowledge; for as regards the useful, it cannot possibly compete with the Realskole. If Latin and Greek are to be learned for the sake of utility, if Herodotus and Homer, Cicero, Virgil, Ovid and Horace are to be read in the original languages solely for the sake of the knowledge
[308] and for the sake of practical application, then it looks sad for the finer nourishment, the classical cultivation and the expected nobility of soul. Thus the school stands in all ambiguity as a higher institution of cultivation — with many grade books — without character. With this ambiguity it cannot, namely, be avoided that the pupils who stream in come to constitute a mixed population. Around the truly Called, Minerva's legitimate sons, there gathers by degrees a larger flock of illegitimate sons, of such as, since they once and for all are to go "the studious path," at a distance indeed have a certain respect for the lofty goddess, and probably also in time will do her the honor of placing her owl on the cap; but who for the rest, as far as the scientific is concerned, to put it plainly, do not know what to do with themselves, neither what the whole is to mean, nor what in a spiritual sense they actually have to do. The mood of the majority will then exercise an influence on the spirit in the school which is not for the better. A capable administration together with zealous, able teachers can well give assurance that morality, order and tolerable diligence are maintained on the whole; but the wakefulness which conditions deeper understanding, the ideal sense, the spiritual hunger and thirst cannot be breathed in. As it is repugnant to have to eat and eat and taste many dishes when one has no appetite, so it must also come

hard to the young person to have to read and read and learn the hundred different things of which perhaps hardly more than one or two could in reality and naturally, — "if he only had time" — interest him.

The more the inward considerations decrease, the more the outward increase. It is not the spirit in the ancients, not the great thoughts of the world, not the rhythms *[309]* of the language, not the clear classical form, that captivates the pupil and urges him to learn his assignment; no, it is other, more outward and real considerations, considerations of "mg and ug" and of "promotion at the next examination." Spiritual work in this way acquires a likeness to factory work; one attends to the most necessary part of the daily task mechanically and with drowsy diligence, but works at full power in the busy time; one is constantly oppressed by only one worry, a quiet worry, which grows as the hour of decision draws near, the worry of "passing the examination." Under the pressure of school compulsion and the in many ways burdensome reading of lessons there is nevertheless a Something which moves in the youthful imagination and shines with the splendor of ideality, it is the notion of the free life at the University. "In school we read only for the sake of the examination; only when we come to the University do we begin to study." This notion will disappoint many; it will as a rule disappoint all those who have not from the beginning felt what it is to set the inward considerations higher than the outward. For the first "practical" demand that the University makes of the young students is that they as soon as possible prepare not merely for one, but for three examinations, of which the two first would by preference have to be concluded in the course of the first year, so that with undivided powers one can then work on the great official examination; "only when the official examination is well over can one properly begin to study." If already in school time the regard to the examination has become an outward regard, and the notion of what it is to read for an examination, break through and consist in an examination, duly trivialized: *[310]* what wonder, then, if the old sober, trivial notion pops up anew, so that the factory system, with its great lessons to be learned by heart, mechanical coaching, hasty repetitions and hurried cramming, before one is rightly aware of it, is in full swing.

It is the innate one-sidedness of the school of knowledge that, when it conscientiously preserves its original character and does all it can in the service of the spirit, it is nevertheless not able to develop the whole human spirit; if, then, the appearance arises notwithstanding that the learned high school is the only institution of spiritual cultivation that can be given, it must sink from its original level down to serve the merely external, to be an asylum for empty show, a dead mechanical system

of learning, a factory system driven by finite interests, from whose nausea the Muses flee.

If the unclear notion of "cultivation," "cultivation of the mind," "higher cultivation," is already harmful to the scientific system of instruction, then the harm is far greater still when we descend and consider the instruction in those circles of life where there can be no question of science. All our public schools, the burgher schools and the common schools, are, without exception, schools of knowledge, all set up for the learning of lessons, learning by heart and learning for examinations, all of them arranged after the learned model. If now these schools were all conceived from the standpoint of popular real schools, nothing could be objected to that; for useful knowledge is necessary for all.

[311] But that is not how matters stand. In the burgher and common schools the express aim is to awaken the higher life in the young generation, to have an educative effect. To education there belongs, then, not merely that the children learn to read, write, calculate, etc.; there belongs to it chiefly that they are instructed about what is highest and most important for life, that they are instructed in religion. If we now consider the instruction in religion in these schools a little more closely, we meet the ambiguity touched on above once more, but in an even more deplorable shape. To impart knowledge of religion and to awaken the religious life, these two dissimilar tasks call forth two endeavors, of which the one unceasingly works against the other. "The hour of religion is a kind of edifying hour; the religious truths cannot be imparted either as mere doctrines of the understanding or as external historical facts. For that reason Jewish children cannot be instructed together with Christian ones; they can have all the other hours in common, only not the hour of religion. The doctrines of religion must come from the heart and go to the heart; they must therefore be imparted by a believing teacher, who in the best manner seeks to awaken and strengthen faith in the young." This is the endeavor in the one direction. But with this is now joined another endeavor, and it is for the school as school still more important, it is the endeavor to impart the knowledge in a certain prescribed extent.

What is religion? "It is called religion to have knowledge of God and his will, and of the manner in which he wishes to be honored and worshipped by us"; these opening words of the older prescribed textbook are to a high degree characteristic of the standpoint from which instruction in religion is conceived in the school. In

[312] religion, too, there are lessons, in the hour of religion, too, the lesson is to be heard, in religion, too, an examination is to be held. What now is it that can be tested by

an examination? Not the life of faith itself, or how far the young each for himself really have faith. Such an examination in faith the Lord of existence has reserved exclusively to himself to conduct. The only thing that can be tested is the knowledge. But what is exclusively the object of testing in the examination is also the highest, most important aim of school instruction, and the endeavor for knowledge thereby gains for this reason a natural and necessary preponderance over the awakening endeavor, the endeavor for life.

The foundation of the public, official instruction in religion is an approved textbook, a short extract from the ecclesiastically systematic dogmatics: here we have the learned model. The textbook with its scriptural passages is intended for learning by heart; it is especially a matter of having the scriptural passages at one's fingertips. Learning by heart is for children a spiritually mechanical occupation; so it begins with spiritual mechanics; but spiritual mechanics in religion strikes life dead. It is of no use that the textbook expressly says that religion is not only a knowledge, but also a life; for, when it stands in the lesson, it passes instantly into the mechanics of recitation that religion is a life; it is of no use that a new textbook is authorized which begins a little more heartily with the question: "What should above all lie upon our heart?" for, what "should above all lie upon our heart" runs along without more ado in the rigmarole. If a prize were offered for the answer to the question: "How shall one, under the appearance of wanting to impress upon children the chief *[313]* doctrines of revealed religion, contribute without offense one's part to their being able from the very beginning to conceive a secret loathing for all religion?" then the task would without doubt be best solved by a thorough psychological development of what, during the learning by heart of a dogmatic textbook, must go on, half consciously, half unconsciously, in the child's soul.

It is certainly possible with some justification to appeal to the fact that it is not a slavish learning by heart that is at issue, that the textbook is only a guideline for sensible use, and that the teacher will always take care to awaken the children's reflection, by explaining to them what has been read in such a way that it both acts on the feelings and enlightens the understanding. We do not doubt that the upright teacher will do his best in both respects; we only mean that what is in itself contradictory cannot be carried out. As regards the feelings, it is impossible that truths which are imparted in the form of mere doctrinal propositions and have so little to do with the child's real life should precisely leave any particularly deep impression or fasten themselves deeply in the childlike mind. Let one take, for example, a

doctrinal proposition like this: "Marriage is the intimate union between man and wife, which God has instituted for mutual help and the propagation of the human race. Married people shall live together in love and fidelity until death." However true this proposition may be in and for itself, it would yet be unnatural if it acted strongly on the little ten-year-old girl or awakened serious thoughts in the eleven-year-old boy. If the little girl and the little boy, when outside school hours they talked
[314] with one another about what naturally must lie on both their minds, felt themselves involuntarily prompted to go through and explain the said passage, together with the scriptural passages belonging under it, with one another off the cuff: then one would surely find it somewhat questionable, indeed uncanny, because it was unnatural. On the other hand one would find it quite in order if the diligent children, the little boy and the little girl, in reading hours outside school heard each other recite the prescribed lesson and kept careful watch over the scriptural passages, both the one with "Let marriage be honorable" and the one with "Husbands are indebted" and the one with "Ye wives! be in subjection to your own husbands"; the childlike thing is that nothing further is thought in it, that it goes by rote; the faster the rote goes, the more innocent is the whole.

The textbook is objective; its dogmatic propositions are all arranged according to the system, and the objective system cannot take account of the as yet immature subjectivity of the childlike age. Let no one object that it is only a few doctrinal propositions whose application and right understanding lie outside the children's range of view; for it is easily shown that there is not a single religious proposition which, mark you, in the form of a textbook proposition, is, if we take it strictly, accessible to the childlike understanding. "God is just, that is: he lets the good prosper and be rewarded, and he checks and punishes the evil"; this proposition a child cannot understand. If it is taken simply according to the words, it comes into conflict with facts of which the young person will become aware even early in life; if it is taken simply according to the spirit, then the meaning becomes this, that the truly good,
[315] as may be seen from the example of the Prophets, of the Apostles and above all of Christ, precisely must suffer in this world, while evil in many ways gets "prosperity and reward"; but up to that height of the spirit, from which so cutting a disproportion shows itself compatible with God's justice, the child cannot be raised. If the edifying interpretation is to aim at showing that evil may indeed for a time prosper in the world, but only for a time, so that, considering the outcome, it generally pays best to do the good: then the explanation becomes reasoning; there arises a mixed concept,

a hodgepodge of piety and self-interest, fear of God and worldly prudence, which confuses the child's thoughts and strikes down its ideal conception of God's justice.

"But" — one will perhaps say — "this whole way of looking at things produces its effect only by exaggerating the shadow sides and staring at the imperfection that clings to everything human; it overlooks the facts of life and stands in conflict with sure experience. For experience teaches that decent, moral, diligent, reasonably gifted children without difficulty both learn the textbook and understand the explanation and find edification in it. Anyone who doubts this need only, when opportunity offers, step into the school and attend a catechization or, what is still more reliable, be present at the actual test of maturity, the final public examination. By listening to the examination every fair-minded person will be able to convince himself that the children really have understood the textbook, that by means of connected knowledge of the whole of religion a sure ground has been laid, so that faith is certain and *[316]* the understanding enlightened. It is surely a most important matter that the young people's understanding of religion is developed early, so that they can give an account both of what they are to believe, how much they are to believe, and why they are to believe it all." We understand very well what lies in this. It is with an often astonishing assurance that awakened and well-instructed children can at a school examination answer questions that otherwise put graying thinkers in embarrassment. "What is meant by saying that God has created heaven and earth?" "Are there other rational creatures besides men?" "Are all the angels good?" "What is God's purpose in sustaining the world?" to such questions the half-grown child can often answer so clearly, purely and definitely that it puts its elders to shame. If now there really were truth in all this understanding, then the marvelous would be attained. But the truth is that the whole is show, a psychological, soul-corrupting deception.

Everyone who has taken any trouble with teaching will have become aware of the suppleness with which a youthful understanding is able to imitate the teacher's thoughts without actually thinking them. There is an imitation of thoughts that can be so deceptive that it looks to the life as though the pupil had really understood the matter, in that he even in part in his own words exactly reproduces a prescribed movement of thought; and yet it is a deception, a for the most part naive self-deception. In the exact sciences, mathematics, mechanics, the deception is still fairly easy to detect; but not so in the doctrine of spirit. In philosophy, for example, one will be able to present any problem, even the very most difficult, in such a way that the *[317]* beginner becomes able to follow the exactly marked path of thought through all its

windings with such clarity, circumspection and apparent naturalness that it looks as though the young man had thought about the matter for many years; and yet the whole is perhaps only a deceptive imitation. Therefore in philosophical instruction care must be taken above all that the scheme does not come to count as the system, that a stereotyped textbook with measured-out chapters and standing paragraphs does not, year after year, settle so firmly in tradition that philosophy itself becomes a lesson in thinking. That a certain thoughtfulness is required to learn a lesson in thinking is surely certain; but it is also certain that there is nothing that weakens more the capacity for thinking for oneself than this hollow, superficial imitation, this thoughtless thinking, which in the end must issue in intellectual mendacity.

If thoughtless thinking is a dangerous parasite in scientific instruction, where so many and different correctives can after all be applied, then it is, as everyone will understand, still far more dangerous in the instruction of children, most dangerous of all in instruction in religion. The objective religious doctrinal propositions lie to such a degree outside the children's real power of comprehension that these can neither feel nor think anything truly essential in connection with any of them. Take, for example, the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. "The bread and the wine in the Holy Communion are" — says the textbook — "not mere signs of the body and blood of Jesus; nor are the bread and wine transformed into the body and blood of Jesus, but
[318] in, *with* and *under* the bread and wine we receive in the Holy Communion the body and blood of Jesus, which in a manner incomprehensible to us is really present there." We ask: what impression is this dogmatic enlightenment to make on the young girl's childlike mind? How is the half-grown boy to be able either to think or to imagine anything definite by the given explanation? The most natural thing is that he does not even try. Should it occur to him for a moment to want to understand the explanation, then he is badly off. "Whence do we know anything about the manner in which the body and blood of Christ are present in the Supper? It must surely be a divine authority that tells us this; but which? It cannot be the Bible; for from the words of institution: *this is my body; this is the New Testament's cup in my blood,* we cannot see how things stand with the *manner.* For it does not say: in, *with and under this* (the bread) *is my body;* it says expressly that *this* (the bread) *is my body;* still less does it say that the blood is in the wine, for it lies quite as near to understand the words of institution thus, that it is the *wine* (the New Testament's cup) *that is in the blood.* If we do not have a divine authority, then we must surely have a human one. It must be great teachers of religion, learned and pious men, who by earnest thinking have

fathomed the manner, and so definitely and exactly that we can now as safely rely on their human authority as on the divine authority of Scripture; but is that possible? Here it is expressly taught that the manner is incomprehensible; how then is one to imagine that there are men who can exactly establish and determine, therefore *[319]* comprehend an incomprehensible manner. Here one is both to think and yet not think, both to imagine and yet not imagine anything definite by *the incomprehensible manner:* how strange!"

It is a great good fortune for the teachers of religion in the school that it does not even occur to the best-gifted boys to want to think over what stands in the textbook. If this bad habit got started, it would cause much disturbance in the lessons; for even if the children were so morally sincere that they never allowed themselves to ask either from self-importance or from random whims: still there would come so many questions that—for the sake of the recitation—there would not be time to answer half of them, and, what is worse, questions that would put the teacher himself in the most painful embarrassment. As it is, however, since that bad habit fortunately does not occur, the matter goes its even, quiet course. The young learn by instinct, for instinct is a fine and acute teacher, that in the impressed notions there is something one is not to imagine, in the understanding something one is not to understand: so the young learn, not to think religiously, no, to imitate and reproduce prescribed religious lessons in thinking, so that the talent for imitation with its brilliant hollowness can come to honor and esteem at the examination. That is not true cultivation, not even the beginning of it; it is mechanical drill. As the recruit is drilled to learn his regulations, so the growing schoolboy is drilled to learn his dogmas; and yet not even so, not nearly so practical, for the young soldier will soon have use for the regulations, but the boy is still far from having use for the dogmas.

If the interest of life were really set above the interest of knowledge, then it would *[320]* not be the textbook but biblical history that came to furnish the foundation. Now biblical history is indeed taught in the common schools and the burgher schools alike; but in this respect, too, the learned model prevails. Instead of letting the great events of the spirit come forward to intuition through the Bible's own childlike exalted presentation, in which the opposition of the divine and the human, of the heavenly and the earthly, the ideal and the trivial reality, can be felt and grasped without reasoning circumlocution, there is used now, for a schematic survey, a little spiritless extract of the whole history of religion, so that the child may equally get to know something about all the things God has done from the beginning of the world, from

the first day of creation down to the Diet at Copenhagen in 1536. Here there can be no dwelling on single great scenes, on such thought-laden and colorful pictures of life as might give the young souls a deep, unforgettable impression of the glory of the ideal, of the power of spirit, when the voice of God is heard, when the marvelous happens, when the supernatural shines upon the natural. For the sake of the extract all events, the supernatural along with the natural, are set on the same level of reality and placed in the same light: that "the Lord sent his angel to Daniel's three friends in the burning furnace" is real, that "Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, which cast him up again, so that he came alive onto the shore" is real, real in the same sense as it is real that Rehoboam was contemporary with Jeroboam, that Titus was bishop in
[321] Crete and Kristen Pedersen was born in Svendborg. So one has an even overview of everything, gets to know in a certain connection a little about every kind of reality, a little about Titus, a little about Daniel, a little about the burning furnace, a little about the great fish, a little about Jonah and a little about Kristen Pedersen.

It is of course no use to want to reason with children about the difference between the true and the real, between reality of a lower and of a higher order; but a little more caution in stringing together the many miracle stories and presenting the supernatural in so sensuous an external manner that the first step on the path of experience and of thinking for oneself must lead the young into a dangerous temptation, might surely be exercised.

It is not proposals for improvements in the existing school system that we put forward here, any more than it is the introduction either of new textbooks or new biblical histories that we recommend. On the contrary, we proceed from the presupposition that the school, as it now is, deserves all recognition—as a school of knowledge. Only this we must emphasize in the most emphatic way, that so long as there are, even as regards the instruction in religion, no other popular schools than the schools of knowledge arranged after the learned model: these schools of knowledge, be they otherwise as excellent as they like, can never lay the foundation either of true personal cultivation or of "living popular enlightenment." In every fruitful instruction either the interest of knowledge or the interest of life must be the decisive one; to want with a certain evenness to satisfy both requirements and, as one says in plain speech, to kill two birds with one stone, is to want the unreasonable,
[322] the self-contradictory, the impossible. So long as the acquisition of knowledge is the goal of cultivation, and the multiplicity of the knowledge acquired the measure of cultivation, so long will the great majority of the population in every country live on

in an unfree, commonplace condition; for as regards the acquisition of knowledge the majority cannot possibly compete with a minority of the more favored. But if the great majority by lack of knowledge is not in a position to attain a true, personal, independent cultivation of the mind, then the future, in spite of political rights and free constitutions, will not become a time of rights, equality and freedom, but on the one side a time of the refinement of culture, on the other of coarseness, and in both respects a time of lawlessness, confusion and bondage; for external freedom can be grounded only on the internal. "There is and can be a free people, but there is not and cannot be a free common populace; for the stage of the common populace is, spiritually seen, that of minority, hence of unfreedom. What matters in popular instruction is to bring the common man so far that he will be able to think clearly his own thoughts, to give himself sufficient account of his own actions; to see and understand that no one in society can have rights without also having duties; to see and understand that the interest of the individual is promoted only in a rational way by the interests of society being looked after on the large scale; to see and understand that the interests of society on the large scale cannot possibly be promoted unless the various classes of labor, not only those who work in the bodily, but also those who work in the spiritual, enjoy full recognition, each according to the conditions grounded in the nature of the circumstances. Only he who is in a position to give *[323]* himself grounds for what he wills and what he does will be in a position to understand the grounds that are given him by others. The difficulty in the emancipation of the common man is not that he lacks either noble self-respect or understanding or honest will; but the difficulty is that his thinking is unclear, his range of view limited, his mind suspicious. The difficulty is that he does not rightly know either how to give grounds or to receive grounds, because he is essentially unfree. The common man is unfree so long as his interior is obscure; but that his interior is obscure makes itself known thereby. that he is in the most personal concerns dark, closed. — There is in the people a double need, need of religion and need of enlightenment, need of the redemption of the soul and need of culture"[1)]; if this need is to be relieved, then a start must be made afresh on a new path, with a new instruction, for centuries, indeed millennia, of experience have taught that the goal is not reached with the old one.

R. *Nielsen.*

[1)] On Obstacles to and Conditions for Spiritual Life in the Present Age. P. 287—88.

Two Kinds of Instruction.

II.

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[409] If the difference between the new schools and the old consisted solely in this, that the former offered directly a continuation and extension of the instruction that had already been founded in the latter, then the hoped-for progress would surely not amount to much. Were one simply to build on the old foundation, one would also have to employ, in all essentials, the old method. Even if a new subject matter were chosen, in that the peasant high schools aimed in particular at making the common man acquainted with the legendary history, literature and political conditions of the fatherland, that would still not change the matter. For how was the method to be arranged? To make the communication of knowledge a little freer, livelier and more entertaining through the exclusive use of the spoken word and by exempting the pupils from the reading of lessons and from examination, would hardly lead to the goal; the consequence of such a freehand experiment would probably rather be that the new disturbed the old without itself coming into strength. No, the truth is that from the school of knowledge to the popular school there is no directly paved transition.

Rooted in the old, the doctrinaire man of instruction is placed in the painful *[410]* embarrassment that he cannot but feel the vital power that breathes in the new, and yet must stare at this new with a vexed and indignant look, a look that stops at the shell without discovering the kernel. From this quarter various objections will then also naturally be heard. “One now begins by making popular instruction a kind of agreeable pastime, a sort of proverb-game with song and sound and all manner of edifying amusement. But to work spiritually is not the same as to amuse oneself. It is ‘earnest and play, that are to go so well together’; and then one chooses the play that is fitting, not for the teacher, but for the nurse. That is indeed to degrade the divine reason. All true instruction must begin with reverence for that which is higher than man, so that everyone who enters a great institution of learning. can be reminded of what the Word says: take off thy shoes, for this place is holy. There is a nursery-like naturalness with which one, freely, by whim and caprice, dares to fall into chatter about the very highest concerns of life, and to peep at ‘Our Lord’ in his cards in a chummy way: is that supposed to be the new? In the self-complacent conceit that sturdy tastelessness and logical unceremoniousness furnish the most excellent proof

of popular eloquence, one fills the heads of the young apprentices with ballads and proverbs, Emter and fairy tales, folk-historical and world-historical surveys, until at last it must make their eyes swim. Following a conception of spiritual phenomena in figurative language that is more dreamy than discerning, one explains image by image, and nods admiringly at every saying without knowing a thought. Far from passing for what they originally are, symbols of ancient thoughts, which only in a given context *[411]* have a certain restricted universal validity, legends and myths are treated as oracles of unfathomably profound content, and their interpretation is made dependent on the most arbitrary association of ideas. What the "myth-smith" meant is a matter of indifference; the important thing is that the myth can be used for anything whatever: a casket of images, in which one keeps what the bard's glance has seen, a coloured wrapper around the prophetic spirit's very latest historical revelations. It is a false striving to be at once profound, witty, and yet simple. To counteract one extreme one throws oneself into another. One would avoid stiff forms and becomes formless; one would get away from the artificial and lapses into flatness; one scorns vain finery, and takes hold of the pure with unwashed hands. Such a straightforwardness, whereby one in a chatty fashion familiarizes oneself with the ideal powers of existence, makes an impression much as if a congregation in one of the free states, in order to avoid false solemnity, hit upon the idea of assembling and holding prayers with hands in pockets and a cigar in the mouth." — Let this, then, be a sample of doctrinaire understanding; it is quite natural that those who are unable to penetrate into the fortress itself must keep to the outworks.

The fundamental difference between the new and the old is conspicuous when we look to the first conditions. The old, official popular school is a school for children. Against children and minors compulsion may be applied; the children's school under the guardianship of the state is accordingly also a compulsory school in a double respect: for the children and for the parents. The new popular school is a school for *[412]* adults; for the instruction of adults society has no compulsory laws: here, then, one can begin with freedom. The old popular school is a school of knowledge and, as a school of knowledge, must build on an artificial, mechanical foundation; the new popular school, on the other hand, which through the awakening of the personal powers of the spirit will be a school for life, can speak with living human beings about life itself, about what lies close to them, and begin with a natural foundation. By considering these starting-points each by itself somewhat more closely we shall easily convince ourselves how essential they are.

It is a circumstance on which weight must be laid that the official instruction of youth ends precisely at the point of time when the life of the spirit properly is only to begin in earnest. That one cannot, by lessons of thought for rote learning, anticipate the reflection expected of a maturer age has already been shown. It is not with wisdom for living as with a confirmation dress, which can be sewn too long and too wide, so as to fit with the years. By giving the child a systematic abridgment of moral doctrine one does not further its morality; still less does one strengthen its faith in God by a children's dogmatics composed in textbook form, for children's dogmatists and dogmatic children will hardly "meet in the Kingdom of God." What holds of religion and moral doctrine holds in a corresponding way of world history, the history of the fatherland, the demands of civic life, etc.: there is a limit to the comprehension of minors that cannot be passed without a breach of the divine order
[413] being made. In this respect it is of importance that the new popular school begins instruction afresh, in that it begins with adults.

If it is already in itself unnatural that a school for adults should condescend to work by compulsion, then the unnatural becomes still more unnatural when it is expressly a school of awakening, a school for life. In the mere acquisition of knowledge, in particular in everything that comes under the reading of lessons and examination, it is a rather indifferent matter whether the drilling is done voluntarily or involuntarily. When a boy has learned the big multiplication table, then he has learned it, and then the toil is over. Whether it went with the good or with the evil, whether it was a true pleasure to him or it cost tears, he may well forget, so long as he only does not forget the table. Otherwise with the truths that are to work upon the mind and have significance for personality. To be sure, there are in practical life many actions that are neither wholly voluntary nor wholly involuntary, but a mixture of both, such as paying taxes, doing military service, and the like. Compulsion and freedom can be reconciled in all such cases where it matters more about the outward side of the action than the inward, more about the deed than the motive, on the whole more about society than about the individuals. But a view of life, personal conviction, love of the fatherland, living love of God and neighbor, such gifts of the spirit cannot be collected by compulsion; they are the fruits of freedom, and freedom has its beginning in itself.

The concept in which the unity of compulsion and freedom originally must be
[414] sought is the concept: upbringing. Upbringing presupposes discipline and is to that extent conditioned by compulsion; but true upbringing must always end in

self-upbringing. Discipline by others acquires significance only by leading to self-discipline; self-discipline demands a firm will, a vigorous self-determination: here freedom begins. The two tasks lying in upbringing can now be equally divided between the opposition of the old and the new school.

The watchword in the old system of upbringing has always been, and will, it is hoped, continue to be: respect and obedience. With this imposing demand the school of knowledge meets the young, and then makes use of the conditions and means that instruction places at its disposal, in order to let them feel that there is something called law. To be in school is to be under the law. Strict discipline is not a necessary evil, no, it is an essential good, for rational strictness is widely different from despotic harshness. Strictness is the expression of earnestness, which makes the unconditional palpable and strikes unruliness with the poet's words:

> "Respect is what is lacking,
> It must be impressed upon thy mind,
> And thou must subordinate thyself
> To that which is a little more than thou.
> Respect, as said, for now thou hast none,
> Respect for the place, respect for the thing."

It is presumably above all the respect for the thing, to which the old school had disciplined its disciples, that the end of the last century and the beginning of this one could still thank for so many great public characters of energy. Character presupposes firm conviction and strong will; but firm conviction and strong will presuppose in turn *[415]* that there is something that unconditionally wills to be respected. Through respect for the thing the strife between opposing views of life could break through in the age and become somewhat more than a wrangling over opinions among newspaper-writing individuals: every view that wished to stand and fall with its character was esteemed; only the fickle characterlessness that wills nothing was despised.

Where respect for the thing is lacking, one arranges matters in another way. On the presupposition that every definite view, just like every definite character, is a one-sidedness, a kind of narrowness in the will, one sets up a literary shop with principles and theories in all patterns, old and new, positive and negative, advancing and retreating according to circumstances, a kaleidoscope of the most contradictory views. Every time someone shows himself with a new view, there is always a journeyman in the shop who waylays him as he passes by, flings in his

face, for the amusement of the public, an old and opposite view, and laughs him to scorn, not because the passer-by's view is just worse than so many others', but because he has the presumption, the narrowness of will, to want to have a definite view and to resemble something that might be called character. If in this way it succeeds, little by little, in transforming the respect of a most honored public for the thing into respect for the shop, then the game is won. Then an honorable owner of such an honorable shop may sit snugly in public and puff himself up in all possible honorableness; unless there were one honorableness he could not attain, that he
[416] could not attain to become an honorable character. For character, according to the presupposition, is stamped as one-sidedness; but stamped one-sidedness bursts the shop, for the shop is airy characterless all-sidedness. That an individual who cannot become a character cannot become an honorable character either is surely as evident as that a being who cannot become a human being cannot become a fellow human being either. "Respect is what is lacking," respect, not for the individual, but for the cause, when the cause is a question of life, the answering of which cannot possibly be avoided, unless characterlessness itself is to be the age's character. Lack of respect for an important cause is lack of upbringing, a testimony that the reasoning individuals have withdrawn from the strict discipline by running away from school too early.

Strict discipline is the honor of the old school; it stands on the ground of law and points toward the promised land of freedom, but does not itself enter there; where compulsion ceases, it has its limit. At this limit it takes leave of the disciples, who must now on their own venture the Leucadian leap into the new region. The transition from the old to the new is marked by the turning-point at which compulsory upbringing is to be transformed into self-upbringing. With regard to the higher popular school this transition is expressly made dependent on a choice. Not what is chosen, but that a choice is made, is here the decisive thing. As far as compulsion extends, the responsibility falls essentially on guardians and teachers; when compulsion ceases, the responsibility falls on the person concerned himself. It now becomes his own
[417] affair whether he will be content with what he has, or strive after something better. The school of freedom invites him, offers him its service, but it does not tempt him. It has no final advantages to offer him, no alluring prospects, as far as externals go; it must, on the contrary, begin by demanding even relatively considerable sacrifices of money, time and powers of labor. That so many, even among the impecunious, have already accepted the terms is a gratifying sign of the times. It bears witness to what stirs deep in the mind of the people: a need for awakening, for inner liberation.

The common people sense what lofty cleverness has not been able to calculate, that there must be a truth which, independently of finite difference in knowledge and learning, is accessible to all, a living truth, which kindles its torch at the sun of freedom and makes spiritual guardianship superfluous. There is, then, every psychological certainty that young men who under the stated conditions enter the school of freedom will not either misunderstand or misuse freedom. The higher school of knowledge must always ask those entering about their preliminary knowledge, for in preliminary knowledge the preparation consists; the school of freedom, on the other hand, does not ask about preliminary knowledge, it puts the preparation in the need. Not the pupil who has the most knowledge, but he who has the most awakened sense and feels the strongest impulse to active participation in the spiritual work, is the best prepared. Nor does he come for appearance's sake; the sacrifice is too costly for that; no, he comes for the sake of the cause. He will not drowsily gnaw on a lesson of thought, unconcerned about the thought itself, attentive only to how the teacher "wants it"; he will, as far as it lies in his power, exert himself to see with his own eyes, *[418]* hear with his own ears, think with his own brain: such a fresh originality is surely able to outweigh the lack of many years of preparatory study.

The foundation for the instruction now presents itself of itself; for the school begins with the beginner there where he is, and speaks to him only about things that he can without difficulty understand at once. To interpret a proverb or to hear a folk legend, a fairy tale, a piece of history, everyone is prepared; daily experience has moreover enriched him with a not small acquaintance with human life and the nature surrounding him: here are points of connection enough, if the teacher understands how to use them. But how are they to be used? Here we meet a difficulty that we must not overlook, and the less so as it can easily be magnified by those who wish to make objections. "Let the beginning" — one says — "be ever so natural, and the spoken word ever so awakening: here is a subject matter, then, after all. The subject matter will grow every day with every hour: how is the listener by mere hearing to be able to collect and order the accumulated subject matter, if he has neither books nor written notes? But if, in order to profit from the lecture, he must have recourse to textbooks and written notebooks, then the method at the folk high school becomes in all essentials the same as at the learned high school. In order that the spoken word may bear its fruit, the pupil must beforehand have learned both to read and to write; he must begin with knowledge in order to acquire knowledge: in this way the school for life becomes after all a school of knowledge; and what difference is there then

[419] between the new and the old? That the folk high school has not been able to maintain itself on the height of sheer awakening and enthusiasm, but has had to condescend to the real, and from the beginning to arrange itself to impart useful knowledge in definite subjects, is a fact. Thus one finds, e.g., in "Report on the Folk High School at Rødding by C. Flor 1846" timetables that read "Theoretical Agriculture," "Physics," "Geography," Statistics," "Arithmetic and Reckoning," "Geometry and Drawing," etc. — Were the strongly emphasized difference between the old and the new to have validity in principle, then progress would have to be marked by the discovery of a new method, a way of instruction that made it possible to impart to unprepared pupils thorough knowledge without troubling them with the reading of lessons and examination. Has such a discovery really been made? And if it had been made, what then? Then it would immediately benefit the old school and precisely serve to level every chasm between the old and the new."

That objections of this nature rest on an obvious misunderstanding is easy to show. In order that the school of knowledge may answer to its concept, the communication of knowledge must be end, not means; in the popular school, on the other hand, the communication of knowledge must be means, not end. That makes an essential difference. Let the subject be, e.g., geometry. If one begins thus: Geometry is the science of spatial magnitudes, a system of connected theorems; it is therefore necessary to proceed from proof to proof without skipping any essential intermediate link; every *[420]* proof acquires its significance through the presuppositions from which it proceeds, and the corollaries to which it can lead further, etc., then we hear at once where we are; we are in the school of knowledge. In the popular school one begins from another starting-point. It is not the demonstration in and for itself, not the relations between mathematical lines, angles and surfaces, that originally awakens interest; it is as a rule problems of a purely practical kind. That a triangle is always completely determined when two angles with an adjacent side are given will hardly appeal to the beginner to any considerable degree. "But how is it possible that, standing on the ground, one can measure the height of a tower or of a tree in the forest? That problem would well be worth getting solved." By starting from something real, from something that is immediately familiar to him, the pupil is easily led to an understanding of what the doctrine of the relation between the parts of the triangle means. Interest in the demonstration is derived from interest in the practical problem. The number of theorems and proofs that he must go through, and the order in which these follow one another, are accordingly governed not by the system, but by the problem chosen.

It is not even necessary that all theorems be proved. When the pupil has once begun to see what a proof is, many propositions can simply be taken on authority. At a feast in the country, where the conversation on the occasion of the almanac had begun to take a higher flight, someone once asked: "how far is it, I wonder, from the earth to the moon?" "Nobody knows that," answered an old peasant; "none of the learned has yet driven that road." — Were a pupil without preliminary knowledge to work his way systematically through arithmetic and geometry into astronomy, until in *[421]* the chapter on parallax he could get that question answered, the labor would, in proportion to the short time he can spend on it, certainly be insurmountable. And yet the answering of a single such question can be of extraordinary significance for his personal cultivation; it can open to him an insight, not only into the structure of the universe but also into human knowledge, an insight that raises him high above the plebeian standpoint and gives him an idea that science and common enlightenment have something to do with each other. Fortunately he can, if he is truly in earnest, with an easily surmountable preparation get his question answered, without collapsing under the burden of systematics. The same holds of the principal proofs on which the Copernican system rests. Here, by a practical procedure, knowledge can be acquired, even connected knowledge, e.g. in land surveying; but the knowledge is means, not end. The extent and the connection in which it is imparted depend on the pupil's individual gifts and personal interest. It is not for the sake of science, but for his own sake, that he works; it is not the amount of what he learns, but the guidance he receives to develop himself, that is the main thing; it is awakening on which it first and last depends. "The most important thing about our high school" — it says in the cited "Report" p. 13 — "is not the positive knowledge and skills that we seek to impart to the pupils, but rather the whole spiritual life that is awakened and nourished in them, so that their understanding becomes sharper, their power of judgment more *[422]* mature, their hearts more open and noble, that there is awakened in them a sense for order, beauty and a tasteful life, that desire for occupation may take the place of the usual habit of sluggishness, that their mind and thereby their nature may become more cheerful, their feeling for comradeship and fatherland be awakened, nourished and strengthened."

If it already holds of the circle of knowledge that concerns most nearly the external and finite things, that it furnishes means of awakening for personal self-development, then this holds in a still higher sense of the elements of cultivation that by their nature belong exclusively to the realm of spirit; we think of mythology and history and the

relation of both to revealed religion.

"Whoever wishes eternal war" — says N. F. S. Grundtvig in his presentation of "The Champion Spirit of the North" (Mythology of the North 1832, p. 95 ff.) — "has an easy time reaching his insane aim, for he need only proclaim open feud on honesty and truth, and his will is done; but whoever wishes eternal peace, and who should not always wish it? he by no means gets there so easily as the dear philosophers everywhere have made them believe, and as one now usually thinks. Peace and quiet are one thing, and stillness is another, so that tranquillity can be united with strong movement, and stillness can be bound up with great unrest, as one can perhaps see most clearly by comparing the magnanimous, victorious hero with the slave bound hand and foot. This was also the image that hovered before our free-born, high-minded ancestors, so that they felt deeply that life is the first condition of what
[423] a living people can call peace and quiet, and the free development of the powers the other.... This Northern view of temporal life among gods and men as a perpetual struggle, which matters only that it be waged as nobly, as vigorously and as wisely as possible, since all the real peace that can fall to the divine people and the noble stock in the course of time springs like a goddess of victory from the struggle; this view must to a certain degree be found among every people that is to assert its independence and be allowed to develop its powers, even in the most peaceful manner, and that it has not died out in the North either, the present century has shown; but its spiritual stamp it has almost lost, so that, instead of developing into clarity, it was more and more obscured, until it became the general opinion that wars are indeed a necessary evil, because there are rapacious peoples, ambitious champions and domineering princes; but that all struggle is nevertheless at bottom abominable, and the more abominable, the more spiritual its object is.... One may well think that it is not my intention thereby to deify Asa-Thor or thus to wash the blood from the champions of the North, so that they seem angel-pure, for all who are versed in history can see that, just as there has been only one hero with an unstained shield, so also the champion spirit of Christianity is the only one that deserves the name of divinity and worship; but I should well like to impress upon all my readers the misjudged truth that, although the earthly instruments of the champion spirit were as far from being blameless as the peacemakers, they were nevertheless neither less indispensable nor less entitled to admiration and indulgent judgment in a sinful world."

[424] With these words the decisive point of view is, insofar as we can judge, stated once for all: mythology, history and religion illuminate one another mutually. —

One may disagree about the manner in which the life-thought expressed can best be developed and put into force, but about the thought itself all who want a little more than a curious peeping into the kaleidoscope of the combinations of the day must undoubtedly agree. The difference between the school of knowledge and the popular school is here as striking as possible. For when the emphasis is laid one-sidedly on knowledge, mythology, history and religion must naturally fall apart from one another into three subjects, three separate pieces that have little or nothing to do with one another.

From mythology as a subject of knowledge one then learns a good deal about Norse, Greek, Roman gods with accompanying goddesses: it is many names, many figures, attributes, scenes and fabulous exploits that the pupil has to impress upon himself, if he is to find his bearings in the whole of it. And what does all this matter to us; we do not believe any longer in the old gods, do we? "Certainly" — one answers — "as far as the life of freedom, our inner life of the soul with the world-view now prevailing, is concerned, the whole thing really does not matter to us at all: we are far beyond those old fantasies." And why must one then apply oneself to knowing them? "It is necessary for the sake of cultivation; it is quite necessary to know something of the ideal conceptions of antiquity. The mythic poetic creations, in which the sublime and the terrible often combine with traits of childlike grace and naive amiability, contain, moreover, a rich variety of artistic and poetic motifs. How should one be able to understand the many allusions in the poets of the present day, if one were *[425]* not reasonably well oriented in one's mythology. Anyone who does not know that Frigga was Odin's wife, that Venus was married to Vulcan, that Mars was the god of war among the Romans just as Thor was among the Norsemen, must surely sit like an idiot in the company of cultivated people, cannot visit a museum, cannot even go to the exhibition and open his mouth without prostituting himself." Thus it is not the essence of myth, but only its semblance, an aesthetically reflected afterglow, for whose sake the exertions are made.

And now history? One has, as is well known, compendia of the history of art, which give a survey of the most important schools in the various periods of art, with names of famous artists in each period together with a short account of each artist's life, works, birthplace, year of death, and so on. Now if a young person, if not exactly from any special love of art, then at least because it simply belongs to higher cultivation, wished to acquaint himself somewhat with the history of art and for that reason made a journey to one of the cities that are distinguished by rich art

treasures and famous galleries: then this might very well be listened to. But if he, after having arrived at a principal seat of art, instead of walking about in the galleries and contemplating the masterpieces, remained sitting in his lodgings reading over the compendium until he knew it by heart, and then, just as he was close to knowing it and thereby at last prepared to enjoy the sight, discovered that his time had run out, that he now, because of other more important business, had to leave the city, then people would surely find that he had taken the matter somewhat backwards.

[426] What is self-evident in itself with regard to the history of art does not yet seem to be quite self-evident with regard to world history, for here it is the compendium first and the compendium last on which instruction turns. As a rule it costs so many years of effort to learn more or less by heart an epitome of world history well larded with names and dates, that when the goal is reached, the time is up; then the reverse movement sets in: one easily forgets what one learned laboriously, and the hazy outline that remains is still further from making the impression of real history than the elephant in an ABC book is from making the impression of a real elephant. The conquest of a kingdom can be told in two lines, a whole revolution in half a page; even if a leaf or two is spent on describing a world upheaval, does the reader thereby really enter into the real events? One holds to the facts in order to grasp the real, and does not notice that the reality itself, with its strife and pain, its forces and passions, has evaporated. What then do we learn from history? "Many things, remarkable things, an extraordinary amount!" And yet, when the question concerns the present moment, an extraordinary little. As little as the dead can write laws for the living, just as little can the past immediately determine what is to happen in the present. It is indeed true that posterity always stands on the shoulders of the past; but it is for that reason no less true that every age with spirit and life has tasks with whose solution it
[427] must begin afresh. "What must be done?" "What will happen?" When these questions become pressing, it avails little to look into a world-historical compendium and ask the past for counsel; for the past's oracles are obscure. It is with the past, when one in an external, finite way has recourse to it for advice, as with the witch of Endor: the utmost it can do is to conjure up a ghost. Every bold undertaking always has in the events of the past just as many grounds dissuading as persuading; if the courageous man wants to dismiss the deterrent examples by saying: "that was then, but now it is different", then the cowardly doubter can with the very same words invalidate any encouraging example whatever. By holding one-sidedly to the so-called pure facts, the naked data, — and that is what the compendium does on behalf of the

items of knowledge — one grasps an externality without deeper understanding of the corresponding internality. In such an externality one believes one holds reality fast; that is a delusion. The external real in the facts of history is not the real itself, but only a picture of it, and not even a complete picture, only some pale lines. What shows itself is not; but it has been: fuimus Troes, fuit Ilium et ingens gloria Teucrum. It is the shadow of what has passed away that is taken for reality, and then one imagines that this seeming reality is the historical truth, the real history.

Is the separation between mythology and history then to be based simply on this, that history gives us the real, myth the unreal, and is nothing to count as reality except what can be directly confirmed by the testimony of the five senses: then it will be difficult, not to say impossible, to form a certain conviction about the facts of revealed *[428]* religion. For it cannot be hidden from an unbiased eye that the biblical narratives contain two unlike components, a supernatural and a natural one, of which the first has a striking external likeness to the mythical, the last to the straightforwardly historical; and yet the phenomena of revelation lay claim to true reality. According to the whole course of the development of knowledge, especially when we consider the ever-growing influence of natural science, it is then also not strange that the chasm between those who accept and those who reject positive religion must grow ever greater. Every miracle of which the Holy Scripture gives a description naturally awakens in the reader the question: is this real or is it unreal?

Those who, whether from lack of cultivation or from lack of reflection or from other, perhaps deeper personal, grounds, do not trouble themselves at all about nature's so-called "immutable laws", but without any intermediate determinations refer everything to God's almighty will, can indeed without self-contradiction regard miracles as real; but as concerns the opposition of the natural and the supernatural, it will be impossible for them, so long as they hold merely to the externals of the facts, to specify any definite boundary between the historical and the mythical. One reasons in general thus: "That Balaam's ass really was able to speak is historical, for it stands in the Bible, but that Achilles' horse Xanthos once is supposed to have had "the winged word" is mythical, for it is not in the Bible, it is only in Homer". Such a *[429]* piece of reasoning can, however, hold only so long as it stands firm that everything that stands in the Bible is externally literally historical. And yet this presupposition, on which Catholics and Protestants are officially agreed, will not even suffice. The Catholics will, as is well known, not admit that the age of miracles is past; they hold, on the contrary, that in the history of the Church miracles have incessantly occurred

and still occur. Whoever, for example, cannot believe that the pious Canon A "walked dry-shod across the Elbe" or that the holy Bishop B was able to "hang his gloves on a sunbeam", cannot believe either that Elijah went up to heaven in a glowing chariot, and that the walls of Jericho fell because Joshua had the priests blow trumpets; but whoever, despite "the unanimous testimony of the holy Church", cannot believe such things is "a heathen", "an unbeliever", "a heretic", "a Turk"!

Those who hold exclusively to the likeness, mark you, the external likeness, between the mythical in heathenism and the supernatural in Christianity, can, if they want to be consistent, not rest until all the supernatural has become mythical, and the whole positive religion been transformed into mythology.

There is one important point on which atheists and theologians are always agreed, namely the externally historical. "If what the Bible reports is true, then it must have really happened; if it has really happened, then it must be historical": that is the common presupposition; on the externally historical reality, truth is to rest. When
[430] theology nevertheless, as "historical science", will, as concerns holy history, come to a different conclusion than atheism, it cannot shake the major premise, but must cautiously confine itself to tinkering with the minor premise.

"If the supernatural is really true, then it must be historical.

Now it is not historical and cannot be so.

Ergo the supernatural is in reality untrue, that is, it is mythical".

Thus the conclusion is atheistic.

"If the supernatural is really true, then it must be historical.

Now it is in all probability really historical.

Ergo it is in every way certain and true, and the mythical excluded."

Thus the conclusion is theological.

It is the externally historical, the scriptural-historical, over which apologetics and negative criticism are incessantly pulling at one another. And in that contest apologetics always draws the shortest straw; understand, it is scientific straw, otherwise the apologetic game could not be continued. The first of the cited conclusions is at least, as regards form, logically correct; the last, on the other hand, is lame, incorrect[1)].
[431] One needs only to bethink oneself of the difference between historical and religious faith, between probability and certainty, and one will get an idea of how matters stand

[1)] After men such as G. E. Lessing and S. Kierkegaard have sufficiently demonstrated the impossibility of "building one's salvation" on objective certainty about anything objectively historical, apologetics might well spare itself the exertion of benefiting religion by patching together "synopses" and mending "holy history".

when theology, in order to save a few historical scraps, must give way to criticism and, in order to preserve a semblance of science, in the name of knowledge stoop to flirting with a slightly veiled atheism.

According to the point of view stated by Grundtvig, the relation between truth and reality will show itself in a different light. Reality is two-sided; it has not merely an externality, but also an internality. It is so far from the case that the emphasis can fall on the externality, that, where the question is about truth, it falls much rather on the internality. This holds just as decisively for mythology as for history; for the internal real is spirit. The same spirit that is in a people's mythology must also be in its history, and conversely. History and mythology must reciprocally clarify and illuminate each other, if it is otherwise to be possible to determine the spirit of the people. The history of antiquity is at once a history of gods and of heroes: such heroes, such gods, and then again: such gods, such heroes!

Just as the heroic life, the higher human life, has its prototype in the life of the gods, and only under this presupposition can be real, so in turn the life of the gods has its natural ground and the force of its reality in the heroic life. The difference between Greek and Nordic mythology is in reality itself a difference between the Greek and the Nordic spirit of the people, but the difference between the Greek and the Nordic spirit of the people is precisely the fundamental cause from which alone *[432]* what is characteristic in the history of both peoples can be derived[1)].

It is with a whole people as with a single human being: in order to gather itself for heightened self-development, it must know itself, its forces and natural dispositions. The testimony of its natural dispositions and of the direction of life conditioned by them is to be sought in its mythology; the use it has hitherto made of forces and dispositions must be seen from its course of life, its history. The best means of getting away from the confusion of the moment and bethinking oneself of the future is to go back to the past, but, mark you, along the straight road of spirit, not along the manifold winding, often bewildering paths of external finite events. By losing oneself in the external manifold the mind is distracted, the gaze goes astray, and the contemplation ends in stupefaction; only when the manifoldness of events is governed by the unity of thought, so that every development both proceeds from and leads to the answering of a practical main question, will history contribute to the consciousness becoming clear, to the people really going into itself. Here in the past there is then much that

[1)]The author of this essay has sought to show this in the lectures: On Obstacles and Conditions (second lecture).

strengthens and uplifts, but also much that humbles and depresses, errors that must be corrected, blunders and neglects that must be repented, weaknesses that must be combated, blows of fate that must be borne with resignation. But in order that history in this way may be able to awaken and instruct, the external reality must everywhere be referred to and explained by the inner. History is then not something merely lived
[433] out, a burial place for vanished glory, the past's dead sea, where memory alone dwells among sunken cities and thrones, but a present, moving power, a stream of life, the river of the ages that drives the wheel of existence.

Only when the spiritual bond that unites mythology and history is found can religion be cognized in its peculiar relation to both. The fundamental concept to which the reciprocal action of mythology, history and religion must be referred is the concept of freedom. The principle of freedom is will, the essence of will is spirit; in the world of freedom it is spirit and will that govern and determine the external reality. If the spirit of the people is awake and the will strong, then the power to act is great, and history rich in deeds; if the spirit is drowsy and the will feeble, then the power to act is slight, and the real history insignificant. Now since mythology is the mirror of the spirit in which the people sees its life-ideals and aims, so this first natural self-revelation of the spirit of the people at the same time indicates the height to which a people by its own forces is able to raise itself, the measure of freedom to which its real history can attain, and in which it naturally must have its boundary. Thus the Greeks in the ancient world attained precisely to the realization of the ideal of freedom which in the form of beauty expresses itself in their mythology; but not a step further. What holds of the ideal of beauty among the Greeks holds in a corresponding way of the ideal of power among the Romans. Seen externally, it is the arms of the Barbarians that put an end to the power of Rome; but, seen internally, this power had already from its beginning its goal, its boundary in itself.

[434] If now in reality there were no other spirit than the spirit of the people, then it would look sad for freedom. For every spirit of a people has namely in the people's individuality a natural boundary that cannot be transgressed. To be sure spirit as spirit is always the universal, but this universal gets reality, with flesh and blood, only by living and dwelling in the individual. To want to free spirit from the natural limitation by dissolving the national peculiarity in cosmopolitan uniformity is, as experience has amply shown, a metaphysical error, an attempt to put the shadow in the place of the body and to make life itself a bloodless abstraction.

It lies in the nature of the case that an increasing civilization and with it advancing

thought must gradually undermine the mythical popular faith and transform the figures of the gods into conscious symbols. If now a mythology could be thought to contain the highest truth and to state the principle of real freedom: then the transformation that the myths underwent in reflection would surely signify not a weakening, but an elevation of the spirit of the people, which in this way came to clarity about itself. But this is not how matters stand. It is not only the external reality of the gods that the critique of the understanding attacks; it attacks the essence of the world of the gods, its truth, as reason sees that such an essence no longer promotes, but hinders freedom. Then the dissolution follows as of itself; for the conscious thinking that discovers the irrational, and with it the spiritless, in the doctrine of the gods, is not able to install a new spirit in place of the old. Thus could the Greek *[435]* philosophy well dissolve the Greek mythology, but the dissolution attacked the spirit of the people; philosophy itself was magically governed by the basic forms of the spirit of the people: by dissolving mythology it reached its perfection, but just as it was on the point of going further, it initiated its own dissolution, for the boundary was set by spirit.

With revealed religion comes the spirit of truth, the spirit of will and of freedom, which alone is able to solve the riddles of reality. The relation of religion to mythology is from this standpoint to be determined by the relation of the revealed spirit to the spirit of the people. To see what lies in this, we can begin with the single human being. Revealed religion is raised above all national limitation; it is destined for all peoples, hence for all human beings, for every single human being without exception. But although every human being must be able to appropriate religion, there is nevertheless, as concerns the depth, inwardness, force and independence of such an appropriation, an unmistakable difference between individuals. Individuality is more than a passive medium for the passage of spirit, it is like the gem that refracts the light and throws back the rays with a peculiar luster and play of colors. It can be said without exaggeration that every true and capable individuality grasps the religious truths in a peculiar way. The difference does not derive directly from the externals, for the confession can be the same and the doctrine the same; the essential difference is in the internal. Not only in the external, but also in the internal a man is different from a woman; from which in turn it follows that the religious life assumes *[436]* another shape in the man than in the woman. If revealed religion did not lay the very greatest weight on the preservation and perpetuation of what is individual in the life of freedom, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead would be without significance.

— But the individuality in the single individual is on the whole inseparable from the individuality of the people. That in the latter as well as in the former there is much that belongs to finitude and falls prey to perishability shall not be denied — this holds above all of the external — but in the name of the general, individuality must be upheld. If now the significance of the individuality of the people is held fast, then there is also nothing unreasonable in one people's being disposed to a deeper conception of the life of freedom than another; Nordic mythology in this respect bears witness to the peculiar endowment of the Nordic peoples. To assert a popular advantage is by no means the same as flattering the vanity of the people; on the contrary it can be an attempt to awaken its conscience. Here, as everywhere, it holds: "From him to whom much is entrusted, much may also be required". When a great past stands in tragic conflict with a wretched present, then something is in the way, something has been lost. History bears witness against the people in question, that it has neglected the opportune time and not used its great forces.

The deeper a mythology is, the deeper is the spirit of the people, and the deeper the spirit of the people is, the more inwardly and forcefully will the people be able to appropriate the spirit of revelation. It is the life of freedom, hence reality, the inner
[437] reality, on which everything first and last depends. Whoever cannot understand that the mythical symbols to this very day have something to do with real life will, when we look more closely, also be unable to feel and grasp that the supernatural facts of revelation have something to do with the spiritual conditions of the present: the truth, the inner reality in the former as in the latter, is spiritual reality, reality for spirit. But just as there is a difference between temporal and eternal life, between temporal and eternal freedom, between man's self-will and God's almighty, holy will, so there is also a difference between the spirits of the peoples and the holy spirit of religion; and hence also a difference as wide as heaven between the idea-reality that can be ascribed to the mythical symbols and the ideal reality that belongs to the supernatural, a difference in principle between mythology and revelation[1)].

The fundamental thought which is here indicated in fleeting outline should now in the popular school assume shape, life and color; for this teaching forces are needed. It already costs exertion of spirit and sustained thinking to work one's way many-sidedly and thoroughly into a rich world-view, and yet this is still only half the way to the goal; for the difficulty is to get what has been gained unfolded and presented. We must on this occasion call attention to the categorical difference there is between

[1)] On religion and mythology cf. the author's Philosophy of Religion p. 11 ff.

lecturing, chatting genially, and speaking personally.

To lecture is to present a subject objectively, to clarify its connection in general concepts and to show its validity by virtue of incontrovertible grounds. In the strict academic lecture the teacher holds back his subjectivity; if in individual utterances *[438]* he lets it shine through, it happens so indirectly that the passing gleams of individual mood serve only to strengthen the impression of the significance of the subject and to sharpen attention to the weight of the grounds. Only by putting a check on his individuality and removing irrelevant regard for private opinions can the teacher bring about the exalted calm, the cool composure, the undimmed clarity of consciousness, that is a condition for the listener to be able undisturbed to follow the movement of thought point by point.

To chat genially is now precisely the opposite. The natural, fresh, immediate subjectivity does not creep into hiding behind the objective, but gives itself quite as it is, unconcerned whether it happens in Sunday dress or *in puris naturalibus* or in dressing gown and slippers. The genial discourse can play in all colors, strum on all strings and produce a highly varied effect. It can be attractive and entertaining, if the speaking or, to stay in the category, chatting individuality has whim, wit and humor in abundance; but if these good gifts are lacking, it can also become long-drawn-out, tiresome and boring. It can become something instructive, if he who playfully plays with the word has insight, vision and understanding, but in the opposite case it can also become something else, for example nonsense. Over all this a higher, unfathomable contingency rules.

He who wants to speak personally must now neither keep to the coldness of objectivity nor warm himself at the blaze of the fireworks of genial whims. He may not, as regards the objective, offer his listeners instruction coming from outside and *[439]* let them try to put on a theory that is not particularly for them but for humanity, just as one lets the recruit try on a uniform that is not sewn for him but for the army; first of all, if we may say so, he must have taken the measure of himself and his listeners, so that he is really able to put himself at the listeners' standpoint, to imagine himself into their circle of ideas, to speak out of their own consciousness, to touch the strings in their own breast and to help them think their own thoughts. This is the task, seen from the subjective side. But the subject matter, the objective, is just as important to him. In this respect he must bring along a fullness of knowledge, a rich material, and have the material duly worked through. It is not the theme taken by itself, any more than it is the form of merely individual peculiarity, that gives the speech the personal

stamp: it is the spiritual unity of both. The teacher must have taken the subject so far into his consciousness that he literally lives in it. The whole must be so present to him that in the moment of speaking, in the course of the lecture, according to thought and mood he can freely seize on the examples, can master and shape the manifold in such a way that a popular character-portrait, a painting of souls from the real life of history, involuntarily forms itself for the listeners. Then the highest becomes simple and is understood simply; thought is clothed in narrative; images and reflections, examples and descriptions alternate with full freedom, but without circumlocution or digressive prolixity: thus the whole presentation works to secure understanding
[440] and promote cognition's development, then the unlearned can naturally follow along, and the learned take pleasure in sitting by and listening. Mere liveliness cannot do this, any more than dry thoroughness. In the domain of the doctrine of spirit one is all too inclined to set a divorce between the thorough and the awakening lecture; in that one assumes that the thorough belongs exclusively to science and therefore cannot condescend to be awakening, whereas the awakening, which falls outside science, cannot possibly be thorough, but must be content to be lively. That is a false point of view. The truth is that a popular lecture must be given in another form than a scientific one; but those who assume that a lecture is unthorough because it is awakening and living must presumably also assume that a lecture is always scientific and thorough when it is merely properly sluggish, untalented and tedious.

From what has been treated here it will, it is hoped, now be clear that the progress made in the new popular schools does not rest on the prior knowledge of the pupils, but on the competence of the teachers. In the school of knowledge the predominant part of the burden of work falls on the pupils, for it is really easier to hear a lesson than to learn a lesson; in the popular school, on the other hand, the burden of work falls chiefly on the teacher, inasmuch as it is always easier to listen to a fruitfully awakening lecture than it is to give it. If only the popular lecture can develop to the clarity and perfection that the importance of the subject demands, then one may be assured that the listeners will surely get to work, that every possible guidance,
[441] be it oral or written, be it to be found in smaller textbooks or in larger works, will be used as time and occasion allow, for enterprising self-activity with fresh forces accomplishes great things.

It has not been our task in the present essay either to revise given plans of instruction or to draw up outlines for new ones; we have, with special reference to idea and reality, confined ourselves to directing attention to a great undertaking,

which, thanks to the many young men who not only among us but also in the sister countries have with self-sacrificing enthusiasm laid hand to the work, will with the assistance of the government bear fruit for spiritual freedom and civic progress, to the good fortune and blessing of the lands of the North. We have fixed our gaze on the awakening on which, in our conviction, alone a hope for the future can be built; but we have not wished either to overlook or to misjudge the good and useful that the school of knowledge, in lower as well as higher style, has rendered and will continue to render: we have, with the difference in principle between learned and popular cultivation in view, wished to contribute to a cognition that in the present there can and must be two kinds of instruction.

R. *Nielsen.*